

G. Hudson

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE GREAT ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING, HELD AT THE Town Hall, Birmingham, ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14th, 1835 ; WITH AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING NOTICES OF THE CONDITION OF THE APPRENTICED LABOURERS IN THE WEST INDIES, UNDER THE ACT FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE BRITISH COLONIES.

* I have seen what has been done by the West Indian Assemblies. It is arrant trifling. They have done little, and what they have done is good for nothing : for it is totally destitute of an *executory* principle. This is the point to which I have applied my whole diligence. It is easy enough to say what shall be done ... to cause it to be done, *hic labor, hoc opus.*"

Letter to the Right Hon. Henry Dundas (afterwards Viscount Melville), from the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, in the year 1792.

BIRMINGHAM:
PRINTED BY B. HUDSON, 18, BULL STREET.
1835.

Price Three-pence.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is impossible to state the embarrassment and difficulty occasioned to the Abolitionists, by this single circumstance—they are allowed to use the materials confided to their examination, under such limitations, and injunctions of privacy, as very considerably dilute the strength of their whole argument. They are compelled, in fact, to withhold names and details, on the cautious principle which has been frequently adopted by Government, in its published official Reports of seditious and treasonable proceedings; and which documents, as prepared by a Committee of Secrecy, are given to the public with a certain character of reserve and mysteriousness, and with mutilations of evidence, obviously injurious to the object in view. They consequently create suspicion; and yet are found to be absolutely necessary for the personal safety of the parties, who had furnished the very evidence on which such Reports, and subsequent measures, have been founded. The reader of the following extract from a confidential letter, from an official resident in the West Indies, will observe the bearing of the preceding remarks on our immediate subject:—“ It is necessary to warn our friends against giving publicity to any correspondence with persons here. You will be plied by many insidious persons from hence; who, under the pretence of friendliness to the cause, will seek to know the sources of your information, to destroy those who correspond with you. Let me request of you, therefore, to be watchful, and never to shew your letters. Copy out the information if you will; but let them know nothing of names and persons. * * * * * I have reason to think that Mr. —— will seek an introduction to

some of the societies that devote themselves to the progress of the measure." But, in reality, the difficulties of the Abolitionists are greater even than are thus intimated. Their *most important* documents are forbidden, either to be cited or even named ; neither can we say further on this point, than add the assertion—the validity of which we cannot otherwise support—that if we were indulged with an unrestricted use of our papers, we could prove, from concessions and complaints made by the friends of the Planters themselves, that the present course of Colonial proceedings is injurious to all parties, subversive of every principle of Government, and confirmatory, in a more emphatic sense than ever, of what is copied on the title from the sagacious and prophetic pen of Burke, upwards of forty years since ; and when the West Indian question was comparatively a novelty. To what this great statesmen said, may be added the memorable declarations of the Right Hon. George Canning—" that the masters of Slaves are not to be trusted in what concerns legislation for slavery : that, however specious their laws may appear, they must be ineffectual in their operation, because there is something in the nature of absolute authority, in the relation between master and slave, which makes despotism in *all* cases, and under *all* circumstances, an incompetent and unsure executor, even of its own provisions in favour of the objects of its power." Could the Abolitionists of the present day have desired testimonies more decidedly in their favour, more definite in their principle, and more practical in their intention, than were thus advanced, prospectively, by Burke and Canning ?

The Resolutions passed on the occasion are subjoined :—

I. That it is the conviction of this Meeting, that in the Act for the Abolition of Slavery, which passed the British Legislature in 1833, those parts of it which continued a system of coerced labour under the name of Apprenticeship, and which awarded the enormous sum of £20,000,000 sterling as a compensation to the Slave-proprietors, would never have been agreed to, but on the solemn and reiterated assurance of the framers of this measure, that the one branch of the enactment was necessary to promote the industry and good conduct of the Negroes, and the other to secure the cordial co-operation of the Planters in the work of emancipation.

II. That it is, therefore, with grief and indignation that this Meeting has learned, on the most conclusive evidence, that both these great objects of the measure have been signally defeated in most of our Colonies ; that, except in Antigua and the Bermudas, where complete emancipation has been granted with the happiest results, the Apprenticeship has been made an instrument of the basest fraud and the most cruel oppression : that even many Stipendiary Magistrates, sent out by this country as the official guardians of the Negro, have become the mere tools of the Planters, and sanctioned by their authority, for the purpose of extorting labour, the infliction of corporal punishment to a fearful extent ; that, while the allowance of food and other necessaries, which in some measure alleviated the former condition of the Slave, have been most cruelly and unjustly withheld, the time allotted for the cultivation of his provision grounds (which are often upwards of ten miles distant), has either been so apportioned as to be useless to him, or he has been compelled by fines, *in time*, for alleged misconduct, and other pretences, to devote it without compensation to the use of his master ; that, by an unjust and oppressive system of valuation, which places on the Negro a much higher price as an Apprentice than he formerly bore as a Slave,—a fact of itself sufficient to prove the entire perversion of the design of the Imperial Act,—obstacles, almost insurmountable, are thrown in the way of his self-redemption ; and that, while every provision of the Legislature for his benefit has been thus practically set at nought, many Stipendiary Magistrates who had the integrity and boldness to raise their voice against these proceedings, have been driven by the persecution of the Planters to resign their commission in disgust.

III. That under these circumstances, this Meeting considers it to be the duty of the friends of the Negro throughout Great Britain to employ the most vigorous and decisive measures for awakening the Country from its delusion on this subject, and as the recess of Parliament does not admit of an immediate address to the Legislature, it recommends that in addition to diffusing a knowledge of the facts as widely as possible among the people in general and their representatives in particular, Memorials should be presented to the Government, urging them to use without delay the powers with which they are invested, in enforcing obedience to the Imperial Act ; and, it

being now manifest that the Apprenticeship has not only signally failed of its object, but that the Colonists have been guilty of a general and flagrant violation of the conditions on which the grant of £20,000,000 was made to them, calling upon His Majesty's Ministers to bring in a Bill as early as possible after the meeting of Parliament, for the entire abolition of the Apprenticeship, as the only means of securing a faithful execution of the compact.

IV. That it is the earnest hope of this Meeting that Parliament will at once remove those bounties and protecting duties on the Sugar of the West Indics and the Mauritius, which have hitherto formed the chief if not the sole support of the system of slave cultivation pursued in these Colonies; as, after the lavish donation of £20,000,000 sterling to the Slave-proprietors, there does not remain on their part the shadow of a claim for the continuance of these protections, whilst the manner in which they are now abusing the liberality of the British nation constitutes a new and powerful reason why every encouragement to maintain coerced labour under any form should be withdrawn from them, and proves that while such encouragement is suffered to continue, the emancipation of the Slaves can never be permanently secure.

V. That the Memorial be addressed by this Meeting to Lord MELBOURNE, and signed by the Committee of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society, and that the Members for the Borough be requested to present it to his Lordship.

REPORT, &c.

The HIGH BAILIFF commenced the proceedings of the evening as follows :—

HAVING been requested by the gentlemen composing the Anti-Slavery Committee to take the chair upon the present occasion, I feel it an honour certainly; as well from the benevolence of their motives, as from the high honour it confers upon myself to preside at a meeting of my fellow-townsmen. But the merit of their proceedings—and I am sure you will agree with me in thinking it great—belongs to them exclusively. • It is my duty therefore, having been called to the Chair, to pass through the usual forms; and, what at a Birmingham Meeting is indeed very light, to preserve order. I shall now content myself with addressing you very briefly upon the important subject that has called us together; to show that I am not indifferent to the cause which, looking to the gentlemen who surround me, I am sure will be ably and eloquently advocated. Whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the *mode* in which the abolition of Slavery shall be effected, there can be none whatever as to the necessity of the measure itself. There was a deep and determined feeling, on the part of the English Nation, that Slavery should be abolished throughout her Colonies. (*Loud applause.*) Many excellent men indeed, blamed the Government for the Abolition Act, so far as regarded compensation to the planter, and the system of apprenticeship; but the scheme of compensation, I, for one, thought honourable to this country. We had been a guilty nation; and it appeared but just, that we should share a portion of the punishment; and, instead of laying the heavy penalty upon the heads of the Planters, make a sin offering for the guilt of our country by a tax upon ourselves. The act was hailed with gratitude by millions, and it gladdened the departing spirit of Wilberforce. The bargain was sealed and ratified; and it became therefore, from necessity, the basis of our future proceedings; and the starting-place of our further exertions. It was rational to expect that the effect of such a measure on the minds of the Planters would be most violent: and we have not been disappointed. The Planters have borne the strongest testimony in their power to its justice and utility, by meeting its intentions with the most rancorous and violent opposition—their bad passions were aroused, as they contemplated the brightening hopes of the Negro, and they gave vent to their deadly revenge in acts of cruelty and blood. I will, however, say, let our vigilance rise with their exasperation. Let our watchfulness keep pace with their crimes. They are amenable to the British Nation for their enormities; and their inhumanity only justifies

the act of the British people. Free themselves, they are the decided enemies of freedom to their slaves ; and hence arose some of the difficulties that beset this Government, and the necessity, for example, of looking to England for men to enforce the new laws on unwilling subjects. There was a difficulty in finding proper persons to send out on so important a mission, since it was not likely that men of standing, of experience and education, and of sufficient authority and influence would be found willing to risk the dangers of a noxious climate, and undertake the responsible duties of local magistrates, unless they had a local interest in these Islands. This is one of the difficulties that beset the Government ; and it therefore becomes our duty to *back* them in their proceedings by all means in our power.—It has been the habit of my life always to endeavour to pursue a moderate course. Justified by long experience of its utility, I shall on the present occasion recommend a course of moderation. (*Murmurs of disapprobation and cries of No, No !*) Yes—I feel satisfied that this is the most effectual means of achieving a righteous cause ; that you will find it most conducive to prosperous results, and that by steadily pursuing it, in a few short years you will see the slaves entirely free. In the mean time private exertion is wanted. The Government had an arduous duty to perform ; but if we do *our* duty, and call upon the Government to do theirs, I doubt not that they will do it fearlessly—and, after all, the event must be left in the hands of Providence.

JOSHUA SCHOLEFIELD, Esq. M.P. began by expressing the disappointment of his just expectations with regard to the clauses respecting apprenticeship. While he felt regret however at this, he altogether agreed with the recommendation of the Chairman, that moderation should be adopted. All *knew* how painful it was to have to encounter interested views ; and although he had never assented to the grant of twenty millions, he did agree to the vote of fifteen millions, as a peace offering, which in his conscience he believed could not have been justly withheld. For, to the disgrace of England, man was permitted to have a legalised interest in his fellow-man ; and therefore it would be unjust to lay the blame on the Planter alone. On these grounds he conceived that the slave-owners had a just claim for compensation, before their property was taken away from them—(*Loud cries of No, No.*) He must say, Yes, Yes ;—he must say, that the man who purchased a negro had a right to that property ; and before he was deprived of it, the country had a right to make compensation. (*Much disapprobation and cries of No, No.*) It was the understanding on the part of the Abolitionists, that the period of apprenticeship was to have been coercion of labour in its mildest form, similar to what constituted the service of apprenticeship in this country ; whereas it had been made, on the contrary, by the Planters, a period of cruel exactation of service, which increased ten fold the horrors of slavery ; and by which they extorted from the bones, and sinews, and blood of the slave, the labour of fourteen years within the period limited by law to seven years.—(*Cheers.*) The originators of this measure of abolition had never contemplated such a frightful state of things, as now unhappily existed ; and therefore the object of this meeting, and of the resolution which he held in his hand, was to express a conviction of the unjust operation of the apprenticeship scheme ; and

that nothing but the solemn assurance of the framers of the measure that it was essential to the well being of the Negroes themselves, would have induced them to give their sanction to it. Much had been said with respect to the mode adopted for keeping the Slaves under the continued coercion described as apprenticeship; but for his part, he agreed in thinking that a gradual apprenticeship would tend to their ultimate good; and it was with this view he had voted, in his place in parliament, for what had proved to be a most objectionable system—a system which he still considered wise and judicious, if followed up in a proper spirit by the Planters; but which had been instrumental in drawing down upon the unhappy Negro an increased oppression, which no one could more sincerely deprecate and regret than himself.

The Rev. WILLIAM MARSH, Rector of St. Thomas's, Birmingham, was persuaded that but one feeling pervaded the vast assembly he had the honor to address; and that was, that their fellow-men and fellow-citizens—no matter what their colour—should enjoy the same privileges as themselves. As far as human citizenship was concerned, he gloried in the name of Briton; for by the principle of their constitution, privileges and social rights were granted to all, independently of their religious opinions. Although everything human was liable to abuse, and in course of time might require correction, yet this principle they still cherished with undiminished ardour. He begged the country to understand that Anti-Slavery Associations were not paralyzed; that they had still good feet to stand upon, and that they would send forth their voice throughout Europe, Asia and Africa—aye, and America too (*Cheers and cries of hear, hear.*) until she had heard and trembled at it (*renewed cheers.*) Why was that celebrated principle, the Balance of Power in Europe, so much admired? Why was it considered so essential? Why! Because it prevented the many from trampling on the rights and liberties of the few. For what were they assembled in that Hall to-night? To plead the cause of the Slave—that is, to plead the cause of liberty for the Slave. Why, he thought that they had already obtained it by the voice of public opinion, and the sacrifice of twenty millions of their property—(*hear, hear.*) But it appeared he was mistaken—the Negro was still in slavery, and all their labour had been in vain. Let them not, however, relax in their endeavours in the good work to which they placed their hands; and success would be certain to crown their labours.—While travelling in Ireland some years since, and while often in dread of his life from the spirit and recklessness of the post-boy, as he goaded his poor animals furiously along, whenever he popped his head out of the chaise window to remonstrate with Pat, the answer, he always received was, “Never fear your honour—Never fear your honour”—(*Cheers and laughter.*) Now, although they had been disappointed—although they had been, as it were, on a precipice with reference to their cause—did any one express doubts to him of the happy termination of their journey, he would say in the language of his friend Pat, “Never fear your honour—never fear.” (*Immense cheering.*) But were they to be told that because a few may have made a bad use of liberty that the multitude were to be kept in Slavery? This he considered most fallacious reasoning, for it applied to every man who abused any favour conferred upon him. In the Committee the other day they had had a discussion

on the word *indignation*, some contending that the term was *too strong* ; but he was not ashamed to confess that he did not vote for the omission of the word, as he could not repress the indignation that he felt when he reflected, that after the sacrifice of twenty millions of their money, the name of Slavery had been alone exchanged for a measure of ten-fold oppression. He was aware where he now stood—that he did not stand in New York, where although Slavery did not exist, yet no man was allowed to open his mouth in favour of liberty. He stood in the presence of John Bull—an honest and right-feeling animal—he is no longer a bull, but a man ; and a good natured one when properly treated ; and who would give more money to benefit mankind than all the rest of the world put together ; but he did not like to be cheated. John Bull had therefore a right to say to the Planters, “What has become of my money—how have you fulfilled the contract made between us? (Cheers.) If you have not fulfilled that contract, you have no right to my money—and if by any means you have got possession of it, I will not rest satisfied, until I make you fulfil your agreement.”—(Loud cheers.) He thanked Providence for the information that had circulated throughout the kingdom upon this subject, and the feeling that was abroad in favour of the Slave ; it would soon be trusted be brought to bear with irresistible force on the minds of King, Lords, and Commons ; and having reason on their side, he might with confidence exclaim “Never fear your honour—never fear.”—(Cheers.) He trusted the time would soon come when the object the meeting had in view, the equal enjoyment of the privileges of the Constitution by their fellow creatures of every shade of colour, would be attained ; and that that, and similar meetings held throughout the country, would tend to accelerate the period when slavery and corruption would yield to truth and virtue, and tyranny and oppression give place to liberty, happiness and peace.

Mr. GEORGE EDMONDS next presented himself to the Meeting, and observed, that it had been asserted, on the part of the High Bailiff, that there was a determination among the people of England to abolish Slavery. Now, he perfectly agreed that such had been, and was their determination, but he would ask, had they abolished it? No, they had not. They would no doubt that night hear from Gentlemen who spoke from experience, a detail of facts such as would convince them that so far from its being abolished, they had but *sunk* the name of Slavery in the hypocritical, base, deceptive term of Apprenticeship—a term intended to deceive the people of England.—(Loud cheers.)—Yes, they would learn from those Gentlemen that they had got Apprenticeship for Slavery—not apprenticeship, as was understood by the term in this country, but a vile system that exacted labour under fear of the lash ; and the consequence of which was, that they were obliged, after the tremendous sacrifice of twenty millions of money, to start again with a new question—How were they to get rid of this apprenticeship? The Chairman had told them that England was a guilty nation. To this in the sense implied in the observation of that Gentlemen, he could not subscribe. He would ask them in what consisted *his* (Mr. E's.) guilt, when he had been incessant in his efforts to rouse the public feeling against Slavery ; or where was their *Chairman's* guilt, when he was writing eloquent poems upon the subject, and would if possible have inspired every human being with the

same detestation of the system that he himself felt?—(Cheers.) For his own part, he must farther say, that he conceived it to be a mistake to say that they should have paid twenty millions to obtain the abolition. The original intention was to lend, and lend only fifteen millions to the Planters, but from some cause known only to the actors in the scheme, they were compelled to give, not lend, to those individuals, twenty millions of their money. He should like to see the bottom of this matter—he should like to see the whole case brought forward and logically discussed, and he should like to hear from the honourable gentleman by what right was every British family taxed £5 to pay for the emancipation of the Slaves.—But yet, they were a guilty nation! A guilty nation indeed! In what, he would again ask, did their guilt consist? Was it because they used sugar cultivated by the Slaves? But did they not *pay* the Planters for it? Well—they were to pay the twenty millions, and that was called a “sin-offering,” and the people were the sinners! He would ask his honourable friend present, who were the sinners? Had the people ever sanctioned the use of the whip?—had they ever encouraged the punishments basely inflicted on females, violating at once the natural delicacy of their sex, and horrifying by their cowardly atrocities the imagination? No, they never did. He had always protested against the crime of slavery, and he defied any man to show any connection between the people and the system. The people, however, so far from participating in the crime, were willing to make any sacrifice to remove the evil; and *hence* their tacit consent to such a lavish expenditure. They knew it was true, that the slave-owners were actuated by fiendish passions, but still they did not imagine that they would have been as base and wicked as they turned out to be. They thought that twenty millions would have satisfied them; but what had been their return for thus liberally rewarding them? Why, a new and systematic plan of punishment had been adopted by them, and acted upon with the utmost cruelty. According to the present system, the child may now be separated from the mother, as before the passing of the Emancipation Bill. The poor Negro who lost half-a-day was now compelled to work for three days, as a punishment; and the most atrocious part of this regulation or law was, that the three days’ labour, thus imposed, were for the Planter; who often struggled to find out imaginary faults in order that he might inflict real injuries. They can now make the Slaves as miserable—nay, more miserable than before. And let wives and mothers hear this—and for a moment imagine themselves giving the consolation of the breast to their tender offspring—if it should be discovered that the unhappy parent spent half-an-hour in thus ministering to the wants of her helpless infant, what did they imagine was the punishment inflicted for this inhuman crime? Why, this unfortunate being was obliged to forfeit a day’s work—a day’s work under a burning sun! If one of the Negroes was found rambling beyond his master’s plantation, he was made to work for him for forty-two consecutive hours; and if he got drunk—a high offence in the eyes of those moral men—he had to work four days as a punishment, although, perchance it could be proved that the Planter, for the base purpose of getting four days’ additional labour, had made the poor wretch drunk for the purpose. Thus throughout this monstrous system, they saw wherever wealth was, more wealth

was to be given ; but where the people were wretched, additional humiliation and injuries were heaped upon them. The act gave to the master the benefit of the Slave's delinquency, but in no instance did it give to the Slave compensation for the crimes of the master. For mere insolence—and how difficult it was to define its meaning—for a lock or a word, if construed into that offence, the poor wretch was liable to thirty-nine lashes. Again, should the Negro cut a sugar cane for his use, an offence tantamount to pulling a turnip out of a field in England, he was liable to receive *fifty stripes* or be imprisoned for three months ; and as a wind-up to this horrible system, if one of them were found carrying a knife in his pocket without permission of his master, though it might be, that it had been unintentionally placed there after eating his dinner, he was liable to receive, just thirty-nine lashes, and no more ! He would not mention any further facts. These were some of the laws of the new system of apprenticeship ; and he would now put it to the meeting whether they did not agree with him in thinking, that they had been completely defrauded of their twenty millions ? And would not those simple facts inspire their souls with detestation of this horrible traffic in Slaves, for Slaves they were still under the worst sort of coercive labour. After this, let them imagine to themselves the advice they had received to use moderation ! Let them imagine themselves receiving thirty-nine lashes, and at every lash hear the word moderation till at length they got out thirty-nine moderations—(*Great laughter.*) The real fact was, that by moderation they wished to conceal the working of the system ; and he believed if their worthy Chairman and Mr. Scholefield were to express their real opinions upon the subject, they never would have made use of the term moderation. Could men talk of moderation when they *knew* that twenty millions of money had been taken from the people. Could they talk of moderation when they saw the system of refined cruelty that was still carried on—Let the man who talked so place himself in the condition of the slave—let him be deprived of wife and child, or perchance see the mother bleeding under the lash for giving suck to her infant, with a thousand other atrocities of its kind—should such a man talk to him of moderation, he would not believe him ; else he must be unworthy of the name of a human being, or some vampire animated by an infernal spirit. Why did not the Government at once exercise its power and put an end to the system ? Was it to be endured that those villainous Planters should defy the people of England, after wheedling them out of twenty millions of their money ! After this, did any man talk to him of moderation, he would beg him to instruct him in the meaning of the word.

The Rev. JOHN BURNETT, in allusion to what had been spoken before, said that he hoped he should be allowed to be moderate in his own way. He held it to be moderation to cry out, when he saw men in possession of the minds and bodies and souls of their fellow-creatures—he held it to be moderation to cry out, when he saw the wretched females still subjected to the lash—he held it to be perfect moderation to cry out, when he discovered men attempting to throw something like the guise of a political creed over eight hundred thousand of his fellow-men, labouring under oppressive bondage. So far from remaining silent, had he a voice loud as the Atlantic wave as it lashed those islands so long stained

with blood, he would give that voice its loudest emphasis in crying out against the abomination of Slavery. These were his views of moderation ; and when he discovered gentlemen sitting down with all the coolness of arithmeticians, calculating the prices of men and the value of blood ;—looking to the children rising into life, and to the aged moving towards the tomb, and exclaiming with the voice of oppression, “ These are the men to be disposed of”—and counting the number of their victims as they would the bricks and stones of the palaces in which they dwelt—when he discovered this, and found the result of their calculations translated into memorials, and submitted deliberately and coolly to the Legislature—when he discovered this, he held it to be moderation to denounce the deliberate wickedness of such men.—In the midst of these their calculations of iniquity, however, they were producing results that would appear against them at the great day, when God would reckon with the murderer for blood. It might be asked if all those proceedings were really going forward, whether they had thus been carried on in past generations, and how it was that this crying iniquity had been so long winked at ? Without entering into a direct reply to this inquiry, he would say, that under the implied circumstances, the act must be regarded as a matter of compromise—of compromise arising out of the timidity of one party and the cupidity of another. He did not wonder therefore that the act had found its way into being, but he was truly rejoiced to find such an assembly as the one he had now the pleasure to address had come together for the purpose of revoking it. They had treated the Planters as they would have treated injured men ; but could there be, he would ask them, greater criminals than those who persecuted their fellow-men ? Why, in legislating for the Slaves, did they enter into something like a commercial bargain, as if they had to do with honourable or honest men ? In the West Indies society was not like that of this country—there it had risen out of oceans of blood and generations of bondage—and in blood it had attained its maturity. It was necessary that this horrible state of things should have been taken into account by the framers of the measure—but they sided with the oppressor against the oppressed—they feared to offend the Planters by throwing surmises into the act against them ; common sense should have told them not to insult them, but common prudence should have taught them enough of their history to beware of them.—Taking this view of the act they might have expected that it would present something calculated to benefit the Negro ; but such unhappily was not the case. The act, as originally intended, had for its object, the freedom of the Slave, and compensation to the master for his good conduct to the Slave for a certain period. These were the objects as stated in the act itself ; and in dealing with such men it might have been supposed that the Government would have taken care that they did not abuse its provisions. But what was the fact ? *One-half* of the act was taken up about the compensation to the Planters, but the same degree of care was not taken to secure equal benefits to the Negroes. Were gentlemen aware that Slaves could be sold, and were actually sold at the present moment ? Were they aware that they could be handed over in legacies like money or cattle from one proprietor to another by the act itself ? Were they aware that the act provided for their being brought into the market with

the estates on which they laboured, and that they could be transferred like goods and chattels? Such, however, was the fact, for the law still sanctioned the sale of human beings in the West Indies under the name of apprentices. But it may be said by some, that this apprenticeship was for the benefit of the Negro—that it was done in order to fit him for freedom. If properly applied, he admitted that it might have had such an effect. Formerly he was flogged *for his benefit*, and he would continue to be flogged for his *benefit* so long as they suffered it to be done. Who ever heard of a memorial or a petition coming from the Colonies for the abolition of Slavery? No one. On the contrary, they were the determined opponents to the freedom of their black fellow-subjects. It was gravely asked what would become of the Slave without this apprenticeship—what would become of him if told to go about his business? Just, what would become of thousands then before him, if Birmingham was placed in the situation of a Planters estate—they would go and seek employmen elsewhere.—But again it was sometimes said in defence of this, that the Slaves could not secure employment; just as if the masters could live without employing them. Were the men of Birmingham sent about their business to-morrow, would they not discover other channels for their industry, leaving their masters to starve in their work-shops amidst a wilderness of raw material, as the Planter would be left to starve on his estate? Would the sugar cane grow at the bidding of these great men? or would their wants and necessities, for which they themselves knew not how to provide, be supplied by invisible hands? He put the master and the labourer precisely on the same ground. There must be a working population as well as an employing one, else the rich would very soon become a starving population: while this was the case, the balance of necessity would create a reciprocity of interests, until at length the white master would be found to combine with his black fellow creature, and the inequalities of colour would be lost in the common advance of mind. If they looked carefully over the act of parliament, a copy of which he then held in his hand, in connection with all its faults, it would not appear that they had much reason to laud its framers, while it continued to act towards the Slaves as goods and chattels to the end of their apprenticeship. It had been said by the advocates of this measure, with a force that intimidated many from coming forward and at once protesting against its enactment, that apprenticeship would be the only means of ensuring the freedom of the Slave, by first instructing him how to obtain the necessities of life. But was an apprenticeship of six years necessary to learn how to dig cane-holes, to cut them, and to take them to the boiler—all which, if they were already ignorant, might be learned in infinitely less time: this was not the case with the Slaves however, for they knew this “art and mystery” at present as well as any artisan in Birmingham, so celebrated for mechanical proficiency, knew the calling to which he belonged. Now, if during these six years the Negro was employed in holing, boiling, cutting and threshing canes, he would wish to know whether such work was a preparation for freedom? It was such a preparation as some horses were subjected to in training, when after years of hard labour, wound up in bad treatment, they were left rotting in some ditch by the way side, or killed for the sake of the skin. This was the kind of preparation the unhappy Negro was receiving for

his final emancipation in 1840. It may be said, might they not be educated ? The Act said so, and on liberal principles ; but what had it provided for this education ? Literally nothing. They took the twenty millions, and thought the education would do another day. No step up to the present moment had been taken to secure to them this important blessing, except the mere preliminaries of drawing up outlines and plans on which to ground the subject of their education : and after the system to be adopted had come out and was put in operation, how long did they think the Slave would have to learn ? Yet were the means afforded him to-morrow, how could the Negro learn, when even his very existence was measured out by time ; and if remiss in his duty, that time was taken from him and applied to the benefit of the Planter ; and should the miserable being err but a hair's breadth from the path marked out by the law, he was deprived of another span of his wretched existence by his master under the name of a *fine* ! Was this consistent with the just and liberal principles of the British Constitution, or was it worthy of the bold and manly feelings of Britons ? The Act said it was just and expedient that they should be free, therefore it was unjust and inexpedient that they should be held in bondage—should it enact that they were to have partial freedom, and yet allow a portion of that partial freedom to be taken from them ! If there was a single doubt as to the motives which actuated the Planters, he would refer to their acts for its solution. What was the course pursued by those men ? Why, immediately after the passing of the Act in this country, they introduced laws into the House of Assembly, not for the purpose of securing the freedom of the Slave, but of getting hold of the twenty millions. One of these measures was to the effect, that when the servant injured his master, the latter was to receive compensation *in time* ; but when the master infringed the law, the fine was to go to the *public*—and who were the “Public” of Jamaica ? Why, the Planters ; so that the fine might be said to pass from the right-hand pocket into the left. This was a specimen of Colonial justice and legislation. The Planters thus receive the produce of the fine on the Slave, but the Slave received no remuneration for the injuries inflicted on him. If this was not a proof of British justice, it was at least a proof of the necessity of their interference. Three months had scarcely passed away after the Apprenticeship scheme had received the sanction of the King and Council, and when they felt secure of receiving the compensation money, when these men, become more avaricious from the wealth thus poured in upon them, endeavoured to pass another Act for the purpose of remunerating themselves for any little advantages they had granted to the Slave. They had the hardihood to send this infamous document to this country for the sanction of William the Fourth, but he was happy to say it was returned to them unattested. The Act provided that there should be special magistrates to take care of the interests of the Negro. But was it likely that men of large fortunes would accept of such situations, and when men of small ones were sent out, it could not be expected that they would defend the Negroes ; for if they did their duty, they were sent (as the expression was understood) to Coventry, by the Planters ; and of course, not being able, for various reasons, to associate with Negroes, they were excluded from what was most delightful to man—the society of his fellows. If on the contrary they went to the

West Indies to whom could they *there* look for the discharge of such duties ? There they were confined to the whites, and consequently to the Planters, the determined inveterate foes of freedom ; therefore it was to the British public alone the Negro could look for emancipation. If any thing was required to exhibit more forcibly than another the feelings of those men, it was the extract of a letter which he would read to them addressed by a Planter to a Special Magistrate to try some offending Slaves—He would not mention the name of the Magistrate or Planter, but merely assure them of the truth of his statement. The Planter observed in the letter in question, that on Friday the Negroes left the field before the hour prescribed by the Act—that the authority of the head people was destroyed, and *unless the lash was applied* they might expect to see nothing but insubordination and rebellion. Lord Chesterfield said in one of his letters to his son, *the graces, the graces, the graces*—Now those who know the Negroes, say *the cat, the cat, the cat*—If you will make an example of the above, I shall be glad to see you as soon as convenient. That is (continued the Rev. Gentleman) *if he would give them the cat !* This Planter added, as a fitting postscript—I wish you had the command of a good ship, and that you would ship three steady magistrates here, accompanied by three persons six feet high, able to give forty-five lashes. He did not purpose reading the whole of this document, which would occupy too much of their time and their feelings. He would however tell them of another case, that of a poor Negro woman, who was wantonly shot through the leg by her master, and when the facts were brought before a grand jury, they ignored the bill, and refused to let the case go to a trial. True, she was guilty of an act of disobedience ; to shoot her for it was the act of a fiend in human form, but that a trial should be refused was monstrous in the extreme. If they looked to the state of society indicated by acts of atrocity like these, it would give them some insight into the character of those they had to deal with. This was but one isolated circumstance out of a thousand ; but he would ask was there a man who had ever heard for generations in England of a case in which a trial was refused when a woman was shot by a man ! It required a certain state of society and of public opinion to tolerate or countenance such violence—and when such crimes were permitted to go unpunished, when such cruelties did reach our ears, we naturally associated the acts with the practice of barbarians, not with the happy destinies of men living under the British Constitution. Their whole nation must be degraded and sunk below civilization before such a state of things could be suffered. Was it a punishment for the folly of the English Nation that such things were permitted, and which when one hears on the authority of such men as the Marquis of Sligo, what can one say to the temerity that practises them, or the coldness and apathy that allowed them to be practised ? The Marquis of Sligo, in his despatches, had alluded to the fact, that the women working in the fields had been, since the passing of the Act, deprived of those persons who used to nurse their children—the water-carriers had been taken away from them, they had lost the portion of salt-herrings that used to be allowed to them, and they were also deprived of other portions of their food, which the Planters contended had been only their perquisites. These were facts which had come under his knowledge, but he could tell them nothing of

the unfortunate beings confined in work-houses—nothing of their treatment in the hospitals, deprived of medicines or care to soothe their afflictions—nothing of the disgusting scenes of cruelty committed upon them—nothing of the pains they endured under all these accumulated sufferings. No ; the Marquis of Sligo could tell them nothing of this catalogue of human misery which was hidden from his eye, but he bore testimony to their propriety and good conduct under those sufferings and trials which he had endeavoured to pourtray. Looking to these things he should simply say, that a grand and solemn duty devolved upon them, a duty which devolves upon you, Sir, (addressing the Chairman), a duty which devolves upon me, and a duty which devolves upon every man and woman in this assembly, with reference to these unhappy people ; and upon what principle shall that duty be discharged ?—Shall we wait for six long years to see the termination of this gradual emancipation ? This I have already described. Do you want this ? No, Sir, we do not like it—we will not have it. What sort of emancipation is it then that we require ? Taking the state of society in the West Indies into account, with the experience we have had, we should be committing over again the weakness of which we have already been guilty in passing the Act, if we were to look for any thing but Emancipation—whole Emancipation—Emancipation without conditions. (*Loud applause.*) The only principle I hold, and on which I think we can now act is—the most unqualified and immediate Emancipation—(*Cheers and a cry of “ be moderate.”*) He thought he was perfectly moderate—he thought it perfect moderation to say, let those Planters have nothing further to do with the Slavery of their fellow-men. Take the whole history of the world since the creation, and tell him where such an Apprenticeship was ever thought or heard of to be laid upon men and women up to sixty years of age ? Just suppose one of these aged beings coming amongst them that night, and saying “ Massa, me one of the apprentices—Negro very happy after six years.” (*Laughter.*) What would they say ? Would it not be a mockery to think of these poor wretches looking forward to happiness *in six years* while standing on the verge of the grave ? Now that they saw this act personified in all its frightful features before them, they must regard it as truly horrible. Only a few weeks before the question of Abolition had been introduced, this Apprenticeship scheme, if they had offered twenty millions of money for *all* the Negroes in the West India Colonies the Planters would have held a jubilee of joy. (*Hear, hear.*) If they took the old and the young, the sick and the maimed, on the whole, they would find that the twenty millions amounted to nearly thirty pounds a-head ! What an enormous price was this—and yet these men had the effrontery to say “ you are robbing and plundering us.” When they heard of such things, was it not enough to rouse the indignation of that meeting and every similar meeting that was held throughout the country ? He would therefore say to that meeting, Go on ;—discharge the duties which devolve upon you—do not be immoderate—there can be no want of moderation in saying “ We humbly beseech your Majesty.” There can be no want of moderation in petitioning the House of Commons and the House of Lords—and in coming together in thousands and tens of thousands, as we do this night, to give vent to our oppressed feelings, and expression to the majesty of our indignation. (*Applause.*) If

there is no want of moderation in doing this, then would I say---memorialize---petition---meet---consult; but by all means do it quickly; for while you are on your knees praying to heaven for the boon, the aged Negro borne down beneath the weight of sufferings and years, is rapidly passing to that bourne where there is no tyrant to oppress, and no slave to be made the tool and victim of the tyrant. In conclusion I would beseech you not to trust any individual---When you come into the field in the hour of a nation's trouble, would you for a moment trust a single individual or allow him to suppress your energies? Would not every man feel that his country's safety hung upon his single arm, and that the victory he hoped to achieve would be his own. (*Cheers.*) He would advise them to adopt precisely this plan. Trust no man. Let him argue thus---If I can speak and act in liberating my fellow-man, it would be unjust to press upon another that responsibility which belongs to me. I respect Members of Parliament and Ministers of State---I am willing, nay anxious that they join hand in hand in the great work of human Emancipation; but I will not trust them in it alone. (*Cheers.*) I would however say to them---You have already heard the thunders of a people's energies asserting a nation's rights---and they were not withheld; when you again hear the same mighty voice demanding the liberties of a race whose only crime is their colour, I would call upon you to do them also justice; and for the rest I would say, "England expects every man to do his duty."

The Rev. ROBERT HALL, of Boston, U. S. was introduced to the Meeting as one of the twelve individuals who had formed the first Abolition Society in the United States. If he felt diffident in addressing so large and respectable a Meeting as the present, he would find an apology in the fact, that he was addressing them on the subject of human rights, ---the human rights of Britons. He was an American. (*Cheers.*) He was proud of his country, but he had no sympathy with her vices,---no apology to offer for her crimes; and, least of all, for that crime which degraded the image of God to that of a brute. He was grieved to acknowledge that his own country stood pre-eminent in this guilt; but in making this acknowledgement, let it not be supposed that he loved America the less, but that he loved the cause of liberty still more. While advocating the cause of human rights that night, he could not forget that two millions and a half of his fellow-citizens were groaning in bondage, of the same bone and flesh that they were made of, sprung from the same Creator, and possessed of the same capacities for woe and happiness. (*Hear, hear, hear.*) He could not forget, that as a consistent American, they expected that he would that night plead their cause. He would offer no further apology, but throw himself upon their indulgence, and in pleading the cause of American slaves, he would be pleading the cause of their own, for he could not now be convinced that there were not *British* slaves. He would state to them some facts with respect to Slavery in America, with which perhaps they were not acquainted. In some of the States of America the slave was doomed to perpetual bondage. In the States of Louisiana (the most wicked and criminal of the States in this respect), the penalty of five hundred dollars was exacted for instructing a Negro; and conviction of the offence a second time was death by the law. In Colombia, there was what was termed a very

flourishing slave-trade, carried on ; as also in the State of Washington, which might be termed its head-quarters. More than twenty thousand slaves were annually imported into Norfolk, Baltimore, Alexandria, and Virginia ; and in the latter place, he knew of six thousand having been *bred* and sold in one year. As to the free people of colour, their condition was, in many respects, as humiliating and degrading as that of the slaves : they were treated as a different race from their white brethren : they were not permitted to leave the State to which they belonged, under the penalty of a heavy fine. And in South Carolina and Maryland, these laws were most severe. In the free States they suffer still more from the prejudice that rankles in the white man's bosom, than from the laws, unjust and oppressive as they are. The free coloured man was excluded from the tables of the public taverns,—from the inside of the stage-coach, and was driven from the cabins of the steam boats, and obliged to keep on deck, even in the most inclement weather. The rev. gentleman here mentioned a specific circumstance that had come under his own knowledge, in which a Missionary, a free man of colour, had come to Boston last year. He was a most estimable and devout Christian ; and at a Meeting which took place in that city, the power, eloquence, and depth of feeling with which he spoke, roused the sympathies of a vast audience : on his return home, he got into the steam-boat, and although in a delicate state of health, he was not allowed by his white brethren the shelter of the cabin. He was obliged to remain on deck during a most inclement night ! The free blacks were not only treated thus, but their children were excluded from the schools: riots continually took place wherever they were received, and mobs were collected to drive them away. In one instance, in which an Academy had been erected for their exclusive use, an infuriated mob collected, surrounded the building, and dragged it* from the hill on which it was built, into the middle of a swamp. The rev. gentleman next went into the history of Abolition Societies in America, which dated their origin from the termination of the war of Independence, when the American Congress declared all men free. Many Abolition Societies were then formed, who recognised this principle to its full extent ; and their effects were rapidly seen in the emancipation of the slaves of New York and Pennsylvania ; but after a while the interest died away ; other cares claimed the attention of the rising State, and it was only a short time since, that those indefatigable champions of human rights,—Garrison, and his few associates—tore asunder the veil which covered the deformity of their country, and revealed the horrid anomaly of Slavery in a land of freedom. He was aware of the prejudices that existed in America against the growth of Abolition feeling, which arose principally out of the identity of interest between the North and the South. Hence the atrocities committed under the name of *Lynch Law*, and the rewards which were daily offered for the conviction of persons found *guilty* of disseminating Abolition principles. There was one difficulty, however, which was severely felt by the friends of liberty in America,—and that was the example of England, in adopting the system of Apprenticeship, instead of freedom, (*Hear, hear.*) He contended that nothing but immediate and uncondi-

* It was made of wood, and moveable.

tional emancipation was the right of the slave. They should hear of nothing else,—this should be the rock on which they took their stand ; for they knew that they could not depend upon the assistance of the Almighty if they did not hold on stedfastly by this principle. He appeared before them that night as the advocate of the Amerian slave ; and he would speak to them in the fulness of his heart, and in all sincerity, hoping they would do a great deal for their own ; and assist him by example, to call out loudly for the abolition of the Apprenticeship system, and for the establishment of the rights of their fellow-creatures to the privileges of their institutions. And from the experience he had, he felt persuaded that if each individual persisted in doing his duty, Slavery would expire in America, and that shortly.

JOHN SCOBLE Esq., Secretary to the London Anti-Slavery Society, said it was quite refreshing to see an American on that platform, and to find Gentlemen from that country uniting with them on the subject of the Abolition of Negro Slavery. He was happy to confirm Mr Hall's statements from private correspondence which he had with the other side of the Atlantic ; and as he had detailed to them much valuable information on that point, he (Mr. S.) should not detain them by dwelling upon it. He proceeded to observe, that the present system must be purified before they could expect to see the Negro in possession of those rights to which he was entitled. Mr. Burnet had brought before their notice instances of cruelty practised by the Planters. These, alas ! were but specimens ; for he dare not go into the revolting detail in an assembly like the present. He had said nothing of the mortality among the helpless children, from the cruelty exercised on the mothers. True it was that flogging of women had been abolished by Act of Parliament ; but although they ceased to be flogged in the open field, yet when they were brought within the work-house, they were then flogged with as harsh severity as before the Abolition Act had passed. At the next assembling of Parliament he would bring before their notice documents on this most interesting and important subject. The ingenuity of the Planters in discovering every variety of punishment was unheard of in the days of Slavery. From the reports of special Magistrates it appeared that in various plantations dungeons were built, six feet by four, in which women were immured for twenty-four hours ! Even their scanty clothing—that slight defence against the rays of a tropical sun—was not now allowed them. A look was construed into insolence: and would any one admit that a system which generated such acts as these was one consistent with the principles of British justice ? He trusted that this respectable assembly would sympathize, not so much with the Anti-Slavery Society of Birmingham as with the unhappy Negro—that they would make his cause their own—that they would never stop till the Negro possessed as much freedom as the artisans of our native land, and that they would demand for him, in connexion with their fellow subjects, the immediate and entire abolition of slavery.

The Rev. THOMAS SWAN urged the Meeting to use vigorous and decisive measures for awakening the country from its delusion. Yes, the country was asleep,—the people of England were slumbering, and required to be awakened ; and he trusted that that Meeting would sound forth the first note of preparation. The claims of justice and humanity

had been pleaded that evening; and, blessed be God! in this highly-favoured country, the friends of the Negro were still to be found, and Britons were anxious that slaves should cease to breathe in any quarter of the world. Britons were unacquainted with an aristocracy consisting merely in the colour of the skin, and despised that republic which boasted its love of liberty and respect for the rights of mankind, while it kept the Negro in bondage, and shut out from him, not only the light of freedom, but the light of celestial knowledge. The people of England were reposing in the idea that Slavery was abolished; but such was now found to be all a delusion. They had been all deceived. How miserably had they been disappointed! How completely had the benevolent designs of the humane been thwarted on that day when the slaves had been brought under the scheme of Apprenticeship,—a system proved to be worse than Slavery. He trusted that the feelings of to-night would not evaporate with the meeting; but that the facts of the case would be blazoned forth through the length and breadth of the land—facts that required only to be known, to call forth general indignation. They had heard that night that the Negroes in their West India colonies still groaned under the yoke of bondage,—that nine-tenths of the Special Magistrates were under the influence of the planters,—and that under the new scheme the mortality had become greater than before. He would tell the ladies and gentlemen present that night that all that had been hitherto done only rendered the condition of the slave worse. Up to the present period they were still in misery, in the hands of their oppressors; and, by some informality, the Act had had the effect of augmenting the power of the planter, and increasing those means of oppression which they were too ready, on every opportunity, to exercise. Were they, under these circumstances, to be talking of moderation? This was not a party question. Here Radical, Whig, and Tory, might all become united. From what had been advanced, it was clear that half-measures would not do; and he rejoiced in being enabled to tell the people of this country that the people of Birmingham would not be silent;—they would cry aloud,—their voice would be echoed throughout the kingdom, until having careered throughout the remotest corners of the earth, its thunders would burst the fetters of the slave.

The Rev. J. A. JAMES said that if it were indeed a fact, which abundant evidence from various and independent sources proved that it was, that the Apprenticeship Act, instead of being a measure of relief to the Negro, had been used as an instrument of cruelty; if the Stipendiary Magistrates, sent out to be the expositors and defenders of his rights, had become his oppressors: if females were still exposed and flogged, and the men suffered corporal punishment contrary to law; if the colonial legislatures were pertinacious in resisting all the beneficial operation of the Imperial Act, and discovered a perverse ingenuity in thwarting all the benevolent intentions of the mother country,—then what remained for that meeting to do, but to be satisfied no longer with remedial palliatives, and half measures, but to go back to the position they once occupied, from which they had been lured in an evil day, and demand for the Negroes, immediate, complete, and unconditional emancipation. He was quite aware that it was a bold, decisive, and to many doubtless, a startling requirement to ask for the abolition of an Act which had cost

this country twenty million sterling, which had so recently been passed with all the most impressive formalities of British legislation, which had been considered the great charter of Negro liberty, and a mighty achievement of English benevolence,—but he was bold enough to ask for this bold measure. He was quite aware that he should be met with the objection that such measure would be a direct breach of national faith, for so indeed it was viewed by some. He would be one of the last men to advise the attempt to do away the Act, if such a step involved any compromise of principle, or brought any stain upon our national honour. It is true when he first read the plan of Lord Stanley he threw it down with indignation and exclaimed, rather than accept so partial a measure, he would fight the whole battle over again. But still, had the colonists faithfully and with good intention fulfilled their part of the contract, he would never have asked for its being set aside, but have quietly waited for the expiration of its term. But when instead of this, they received it in the first instance with the surly growl of disappointed tyranny, and since then, had extracted much of the little honey it contained, and envenomed its poison, since they had employed all the subtleties of law and all the chicanery of legislation to nullify its beneficial provisions,—since they had passed acts contrary to its spirit and design,—he felt no delicacy in going up to the legislature and asking them to tear it in pieces and scatter it to the winds of heaven. Faith had been broken; notoriously, publicly, and shamelessly broken; but by whom? By the colonists. He considered that there were always two parties to a contract, and if the one party failed in their obligations, the other were no longer bound by theirs: there were reciprocal obligations, which were cancelled on both sides, if refused by either. He felt himself therefore quite relieved from all delicacy on this subject and hoped the meeting would also. The Apprenticeship Act had failed in its object, and ought to be repealed. For what was that object? Let it be loudly, repeatedly and emphatically declared, that this object, was not to pay twenty millions to the Planters—this, it is true, was one of its provisions, and enactments, but not the main object of the Bill; but its great design was to give a measure of substantial freedom to the Negro, and to impose no more restrictions than were necessary to carry it into safe and easy operation. In this they had signally failed, and the delusive statute ought to be immediately annulled.

He congratulated his fellow-townsmen on the honours, of which they may be almost proud, of being the first town in the Empire that had raised its public and indignant voice against the present state of our Negro fellow-subjects; they had given the key-note to that chorus, loud and deep, of sympathy for the Negroes and resentment against their oppressors, which was about to be raised, he hoped, through the length and breadth of the land. Let them go on to take an interest in the cause. They had liberty,—they enjoyed it,—and would suffer no man to take it from them. Let them recollect that the noblest end of freedom was to employ it in gaining the liberty of others, and that its sublimest position was to be seen smiting off the fetters of the slave. They would be advised to let alone the business, for that the Act would expire in five years. It might be well enough for those in the possession of liberty and all its comforts, to speak of five years as a short term; far differently

would it be viewed and felt by those in bondage. Let them think of the lashes that would be inflicted, tears that would be shed, the groans that would be heard, and the hearts that would be broken in those five years ; and would they speak lightly of this mass of misery ? And moreover, it should not be forgotten, that goaded by disappointed hope and a sense of aggravated wrong, the Negro, hitherto exemplary for his patience, might throw off his forbearance, rise upon his oppressor ; and the whole system of slavery even yet be drowned in the blood of the blacks, or the whites, or of both. They would be told, that if the Act were to expire to-morrow the Negroes would be much at the mercy of the Planter, and that it would be wise therefore to conciliate him. So it would, if it were possible. Let the friends of the Negro in this town come forth and not be weary of well doing : they and their fathers had helped to extinguish the infernal slave trade—they had changed the name of slave into that of Apprentice—and now there was but one thing more for them to do, and to do immediately ; and that was to seek that the delusive and equivocal name of Apprentice, might be lost for ever in the intelligible appellation of **FREEMAN** : when they had done this, and not till then, should they allow themselves to consider that they had done their work.

Captain MOORSOM, R. N. was happy to perceive the determination manifested by the meeting, to persevere till the system was totally abolished ; and he trusted that when the subject was again submitted to Parliament, the Member who promised again to introduce it would be backed by the moral sense and moral power of the people ; and would meet his opponent in the Senate hand to hand, and foot to foot, with an unflinching mind, and unflattering heart. While he felt fully confident of the triumphs of justice and of mercy, he also felt assured that every contrivance would be had recourse to by the Planters, to weave round the negro the meshes of slavery ; and would he not have the power to do so, as no doubt he would have the will ?

At the close of the Meeting the following Memorial to Lord Melbourne, was carried by acclamation.

MEMORIAL TO LORD MELBOURNE.

“ That your Memorialists, although generally of opinion, in the first instance, that the Abolition Act was, in its own nature impracticable, were willing to afford it an equitable trial ; waiting the result under a hope that, in the event of its failure, such legislative measures would be pursued, as should coincide with the reasonable expectations of the British public.

“ The experiment of one year has not only justified their previous opinion, but proved, that the Act, instead of attaining its professed object, has directly, or indirectly, augmented the evils of Colonial Slavery.

“ To this disastrous issue must be added the fact, that as the enormous sacrifice of twenty millions to the Planters was made under an implied covenant, that they should faithfully perform their share towards carrying into effect the provisions of the Act, and as such condition has not been performed, we consider the nation to be virtually released from

any obligation to discharge a debt thus cancelled. The transaction, indeed, on the part of those who receive the bounty, without affording the relief in consideration of which it was granted, we regard as having the character of a practical and deliberate fraud; and such as, in all other human contracts, would be universally and deeply resented.

" The present course of proceeding, if not vigorously and perseveringly resisted, will, in the apprehension of your Memorialists, terminate in our having presented a gratuity of twenty millions to the Planters, and in an indefinite continuation of Slavery.

" Under these circumstances your Memorialists appeal to his Majesty's Ministers at the close of a Session, during which this urgent subject was not suffered to be examined; and aware, also, of the long period likely to elapse before it can again be offered to Parliamentary investigation.

" In the interval, the sum of fifteen millions, being the first instalment of what cannot *now* be equitably claimed, will have been paid; and the Treasury of the United Kingdom so far abandoned to an Act of spoliation.

" We consider it to be superfluous to extend the present Memorial, by adducing such facts as would authenticate the general statement; knowing that sufficient evidence is already deposited in the Colonial Office; and that his Majesty's Government has also received detailed representations of the incompetency of the Abolition Act to its purposes, and the defeat of its more efficient clauses by Colonial Legislation. We therefore refrain from what would be only a repetition of facts either acknowledged to exist, or not denied, or attempted to be refuted, by any party interested in their authenticity; more particularly as a Memorial recently presented by the Anti-Slavery and Abolition Societies of the Metropolis, containing a condensed analysis of the general subject, and which, as we understand, was received without the least intimation that it conveyed a single exaggeration of fact or argument, is deposited in the hands of the Colonial Secretary, as an accredited reference to the points under discussion.

" It may not be unadvisable to state, that the present unsatisfactory condition of the Sugar Colonies is acknowledged by all parties, and looked upon as the immediate consequence of the working of the Apprenticeship scheme; and that, therefore, the advocates for the Abolition of Slavery are supported by public, and even hostile opinion, in their remonstrances as to the necessity of revising the present existing system.

" It would be disingenuous, indeed, to allege that your Memorialists only aim at a farther experiment, under the Imperial Act, of what may be accomplished by an improvement of subordinate Legislation among the Colonists themselves; as though we depended upon their intention, or power, to establish a polity of justice and mercy, with an ultimate view to the abolition of Slavery. On the contrary, we would distinctly state our conviction, that nothing short of the entire emancipation of the Slave from every restraint, except such as may be, and is, equally imposed upon the white population, will effectually destroy, or even materially alleviate, the oppressions of the Colonial system.

" But as long as the measures of Government at home are subject to revision and practical repeal, by inferior powers, we are compelled

to view all attempts towards the actual abolition of Slavery as nugatory.

"Under the influence of this conviction, we can only express our surprise that, considering the discretion vested in his Majesty's Ministers, it should be deemed obligatory to distribute any farther portion of the public revenue among claimants who have actually forfeited all right to the Parliamentary bounty, by disobedience to a statute founded on the principle of a formal and inviolable covenant. It appears to your Memorials, that such distribution is directly a measure of injustice to those, from whose resources the sum of twenty millions is abstracted."

APPENDIX.

The subsequent extracts are selected from a vast mass of papers; and have chiefly appeared elsewhere. But as our space is limited, the details are confined to the state of things in Jamaica, well known to be the most important of the Western Islands; and where, of course, the actual Abolition of Slavery would be most extensively beneficial to the Negro population, and most influential, as an example, to the rest of the Sugar Colonies.

May 28, 1835.—"On many of the estates, they began, from the 1st August, a system of annoyance towards the Negroes which only shows me ten times more strongly than I thought when I wrote before, the real and secret history of former times. They turned women of seventy years of age, with more than ten children alive, who during slavery were always exempt from labour, or at least any thing more than nominal labour, to the field. Another cruelty is that of depriving the *working* and *suckling* mothers of the assistance of these women to watch their children in the trays under the shade in the field, in order that the mothers may come and occasionally suckle them. It came to my knowledge that in some instances they forced them to work all day with their children *tied on their backs.*" *February 24, 1835.**—"The new law made in aid of the Abolition Act, is very bad: Apprentices are now valued at 60, 80, 90, pounds; *in fact they cannot now purchase themselves.* Some of the Special Magistrates flog most cruelly." *October 18, 1834.*—"If a person not practically acquainted with the economy of a plantation had sat down to imagine a scheme that could entirely mar the benevolence of this great measure, he could never have devised an

* "I have just learned that Mr. —— has been suspended from his office as Stipendiary Magistrate; and that —— has been compelled to resign. Dr. —— says they are two of the best men in Jamaica. Dr. —— has been ordered to another district; and he has refused, and is determined to try the power of the —— to act in this arbitrary way. Seventeen Special Magistrates have died, resigned, or been suspended during the year; all of whom, with the exception of J—, are, I believe, the friends of the Negro. Whom have we left? I fear those only who are friends of the planter."---*From a more recent communication.*

expedient equally successful with that by which the creole mind turned the whole blessing into a curse."†—"Overseers and book-keepers are not only adverse to the new system, but interested in defeating it. It has deprived them of authority ; in a few years it will deprive them of bread. Their irritation is exhibited on every trivial occasion, in expressions of invective and abuse. The vexations the Negroes endure, consist in withholding the customary allowance of salted provisions, rum, and sugar ; or, where they are continued, of exacting from the Negro such extra labour as the law allotted for the necessary cultivation of the Negro grounds. It is in vain that the Attorney General has invoked the spirit of the law where it has been deficient in the letter, to secure for the Apprentice the continuance of their usual allowances, and those privileges, which the old law afforded to the slaves, of exemption from field labour for those women who had six children living on a property, or the allotment of lighter work for those in the last months of pregnancy, or the abstraction of sufficient time from their masters for the necessary performance of the offices of maternity which was formerly permitted to the mother in the field." *March 16, 1835*—"The system is working worse and worse. Some of the Special Magistrates appear to have no regard whatever to law.—A number of liberal and upright Special Magistrates have resigned their commissions in disgust ; and those who remain in the special commission are persons who were formerly overseers, and others who themselves are apprentice-masters ; and the severe floggings they inflict, and their disregard to the interests of the Apprentices, as well as the favours which they receive from estates, show that they are not fit for the important and responsible office which they hold. The Apprentices view them with distrust and indignation, instead of confiding in them as friends and protectors. Their hopes are in many respects dashed ; and *several of them have said to me, that they wished the 1st of August had never come.*" *April 1, 1835*.—"You can conceive nothing more thoroughly horrible than the system of coerced labour, under the Apprentice Law." After alluding to the severity of the punishments inflicted both on male and female Negroes, he adds, "Unmitigated Slavery was nothing to this. It induces a most hopeless feeling, for it is injustice under the pretence of law ; whereas the old state of things the Negro knew to be lawless altogether."—"Mr. Kennedy, of St. Anne's, was indicted for shooting an old woman on his uncle's property ; he had ordered her to go home before him, to be put in confinement, for assisting a Negro during master's time. The woman begged hard to be let go, 'and never would help neger in massa's time again ;' but Mr. Kennedy would not hear her ; she attempted to get away ; he levelled his double-barrelled gun, and lodged the contents of one barrel in her leg and thigh. He then discharged the other barrel, but missed his aim. The wounded woman was then taken home ; no doctor was sent for ; and the following day she was ordered to the field. The evidence was incontrovertible, but the *Grand Jury ignored the*

* From a "Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies, during the transition from Slavery to Apprenticeship ; by R. R. Madden, M. D." 2 vols. Cochrane and Co. The author was one of the Stipendiary Magistrates : he resigned his commission in disgust. His work is most earnestly recommended to general perusal ; and might almost be regarded as decisive of the question against the Planters, in the absence of all other evidence.

Bill."*—"Mr. Portland, of St. Anne's, was tried for the murder of an aged Negro, his watchman. The circumstances were these. For some offence, he was causing the Negro to walk before him, to be put in confinement. The old man did not, or could not walk as fast as Mr. P. desired; and for not doing so, Mr. P. took out his pistol and shot him through the back—the man lingered a few days, and then died. There was a verdict of manslaughter, and Mr. P. was sentenced to nine months imprisonment."†—"Mr. Mouchette of Montego Bay, was indicted for causing one of his Negroes to be torn by dogs, and severely injured thereby. The man's offence was going without leave of the overseer to bury his wife, then dead three days, he (the overseer) having previously, on three occasions, refused the man time to dig the grave. When it was discovered that the Negro in his desperation had gone without permission, Mr. M. had the dogs brought out and set on the Negro. The result was the injury alluded to. The Chief Justice, to his honour, put the case before the Jury in such a way, that the white man could not escape conviction. There was a verdict of guilty, and 'the atrocious cruelty,' as the conduct of the prisoner was stigmatised by the Chief Justice, was punished with a fine of £100 currency."—"Mr. Brackenridge, a book-keeper, was tried for the murder of a Negro, and for injury done to two others, by shooting at them through the door of their hut, where they were singing hymns. (I visited this man in prison, and was disgusted at the indifference he manifested.) I have not heard the result of the trial; but, from the exertions made in his behalf by the white people, I have no idea he will be convicted. These are only a few of the cases of atrocity that have gone before the higher court; but were those which have come before the Special Magistrates, even since last August, brought before the public, they would hardly be credited." *February 26, 1835.*—"I went on the 11th instant to Rodney Hall workhouse, and saw the treadmill. It is a most frightful instrument of torture and death. The person at the workhouse told me that two pregnant females had died in consequence of having been put upon it; but that his master did not know the state they were in, or he would not have put them on the mill. The poor workhouse Negroes are put upon the wheel every morning before going to work upon the road, for twenty minutes; and again for twenty minutes each evening in coming from it. Their yells are dreadful; and when a poor wretch misses step, he has his leg skinned by the mill, and he is flogged until he regains his position upon it. One old man told me, he heard all the Negroes around him saying they would rather take a severe flogging, than be put upon that mill every day for a fortnight. If we have any further disturbance, it will be caused by the awful oppression and cruelty that is going on I fear over a great part of the island." *July 8, 1835.*—"I am sorry to say Captain _____'s information from Jamaica is any thing but satisfactory. He is one of the Magistrates who protected the Negroes, and, therefore

* This statement derives an awful importance, not from the cruelty of the individual who committed the crime, but from the circumstance, that a Grand Jury could deliberately acquit the criminal—an illustration of the public feeling existing in Jamaica among the higher ranks of society.

† In accordance, of course, with the estimate formed by Colonial jurisprudence, of the amount of guilt contracted by actual murder.

has been persecuted. One fellow of the name of ——, a *Magistrate* of the country till last December, has laid actions against him; the damages of which amount to nine thousand pounds. I have little hope of amelioration of the condition of the Negroes while this system of Apprenticeship lasts. The attorneys, and planting agents of the proprietors, who compose the House of Assembly, are playing a *very deep game*: they are seeking to oust the absent proprietors, to induce them to dispose of their properties for little or nothing; alarming the timid by gloomy representations of the present state of things, and still gloomier forebodings of future prospects." *April 7, 1835, (from a Missionary.)*—"Several Slaves have said to me in the bitterness of their sorrow, that they wished things had remained as they were before. For this I always check them, and call to their minds the fact, that at the end of six years they will be free. They reply, 'But if our owners are so hard upon us, we shall not live till then.' This is a fact, that the care of their lives, which on the old system was the owner's interest, is not now of so much importance; and the Apprentice feels this. If the young children are sick, the mother cannot attend them, without paying back the time so employed. They are obliged to hire a person to nurse their children, while they go to work in the fields; as the estate does not, as formerly, furnish a nurse. Their supplies of food and clothing at Christmas are very imperfectly afforded."—Extract of a dispatch from the Marquis of Sligo, to the Right Hon. T. S. Rice,* *August 13, 1834* :—"From what Colonel Macleod has informed me, I am confident, that as soon as the misunderstanding is got rid of, they (the Negroes) will be quiet, unless *forced into rebellion by the conduct of the overseers*, and, I am sorry to say, *many of the masters and managing attorneys*. My letters by yesterday's post, have confirmed this opinion, as there have been several petty disturbances, attended with cases of punishment, in St. James's Westmoreland, and St. Elizabeth, in almost every instance caused either by the intemperate conduct of the overseers, or exaction by the proprietors or managers." *February 26, 1835.*—"Many of the valuations are excessively high; as those who wish to purchase their Apprenticeship are generally of the first description of Negroes: and the masters on such occasions do not fail to give them the highest character for excellence, in order to enhance the value of their services to them for the remainder of their Apprenticeship, and so obtain a higher valuation. The general way of proceeding is for three Magistrates to put down each one his price, to add the three prices together, and take one third of the whole. Thus one may say £120, another 80, and the stipendiary Magistrate may value at 40. The three sums would be £240, and the one-third £80: and this would probably be the price agreed on as the value of the remainder of the Negro's Apprenticeship." *April 30, 1835.*—"The effects of a certain Colonial Act are to prevent any Negro from liberating himself unless he pay an exorbitant price. I will give you an example:—A Negro belonging to an estate—say one of the great gang—

* In this instance alone we have given the *names* of the official parties, and the reader will see the importance of authenticating the statement in the text, by the authority of the Governor of Jamaica when addressing the Secretary for the Colonies. In another dispatch Lord Sligo writes,—"I am confident the Negroes will be quiet, unless forced into rebellion by the conduct of the overseers, or exactions by the proprietors or managers."

applies to purchase the remainder of his Apprenticeship. The master on oath states that he has never hired him out, but that he is worth 3s. 4d. per day to him, as he pays at that rate for jobbers. The Apprentice cannot disprove this; and the Magistrate under the Act values as follows:—

Four days and a half weekly, at 3s. 4d. per day	
is 15s. per week, or £39 per year. Five	
Years and three months, supposing the valua-	
tion takes place in April, at £39 per year is	£204 15 0
Deduct one-third for contingencies.	68 5 0

Balance of Apprenticeship term. £136 10 0

Were such a valuation to occur, it would be quite in accordance with the new law; and unless the Apprentice paid the amount, he would be compelled to remain such. The lowest valuations are now from £40 to 50.

Mr. —— had to pay more than £50 for a female, whose manumission I was requested to procure immediately after the 1st. of August, for whom I would not have given £40 one month before." *May 28, 1835.*

—“Look at the sufferings of the Missionaries—the destruction of places of worship, and reflect upon the horrible fate of Slaves who died under the lash, while others were executed without trial; and then recollect that the bill of indemnity, passed by the very perpetrators, was provided as a safeguard against the punishment which their offences merited. Do these men repent of their conduct,—do the colonists exhibit one particle of compunction,—do they express the slightest regret for the past, and expiate their conduct by the promise of future amendment? No, the very reverse! the cry is, “Let MARTIAL LAW come again, and we shall know what to do: the —— are PAID for now, and we cannot lose if we do not leave one black skin in the island! What can they (the parent government), do to us? We have only to pass *another Bill of Indemnity*. Let what will happen, they cannot injure us.” *June 20 & 26, 1835.*

—“Coercion is decidedly on the increase. In a few instances the Governor has tried to check it! but it is too late; he had given way too far. He has dismissed two or three drunken magistrates, who were not even fit companions for the majority of Overseers. He dismissed Mr. —— for cruelty, after having allowed him to enjoy a reign of terror almost unequalled in the annals of Slavery for the space of seven months. Mr. —— would still have been in the commission, had not his brutal propensities brought him in contact with the rector of the parish, who happens to be one of the few among our clergy of correct principles.—Mr. ——, Mr. ——, and Mr. ——, who are looked on as the most prominent of the coercive party, are still in office. I alluded in a former letter to a case of a man and woman being chained together: since then I have obtained the particulars. As I conjectured, Mr. —— was the magistrate who passed the sentence. The woman’s name, Priscilla Taylor, (married) apprentice to Mr. Brown, of Happy Grove, St. Andrews, had been ordered one Friday to go for water to some distance. Her master said she took too long to go for it. In the evening he caused her to be put in the dungeon, and kept her there all Saturday, her own day. On Monday, she went to Mr. —— to complain: he gave her a letter. On her way home she lost the letter: and returned to Mr. ——, who gave her another letter: she then returned home. Next day Mr. —— visited

the property, and ordered her (Priscilla) *to be chained to a man*; and to be worked in the field in such manner. They afterwards escaped; and with collars and chain on, presented themselves before Special Justice —, of Spanish Town, since dead. He sent them to the workhouse, where they remained two weeks, all but two days; were taken back by their master; were again ordered to be chained together, and sent to the field. Priscilla declared she would not be chained to the man; again resisted; was then put in the dark hole and kept there till Friday (from Wednesday), when she was again taken, and personal violence resorted to, in order to chain her to the man. Her resistance and struggles, together with her excited feelings, at length brought on alarming hysterical convulsions: she was carried back to the dungeon with the chain and collar on her neck, where she was kept locked up, although she was the mother of an infant seventeen months old, which was not weaned when she was first put in chains. —A man applied to me the other day from a neighbouring parish, having a very bad sore leg; he was resting in the field—his overseer took offence at it—beat him violently with a cane; then knocked him down, and kicked him with all his force on the head and body, and finally sent for one of the plantation-constables—had the man laid down and flogged with the cat across the shoulders, the marks of which he exhibited. The magistrate certainly fined the overseer £5. but the affair was slurred over as a common assault. The overseer was excessively indignant at being fined, and since then is incessantly harrassing his victim.—The demand for iron collars and chains at the stores of the ironmongers has never been so great for twenty-five years back, as it has been during the last four months. In nearly every part of the island are to be seen penal gangs on estates, composed of men and women, boys and girls, kept at constant work in the field, chained in pairs. The Planters are delighted with this mode of punishment, as the culprits then have no days,—are kept at work after hours every day, and every Friday and Saturday,—are locked up in the dungeon every night, and the whole of *Sunday*. It is, therefore, very profitable to have strong penal gangs constantly on hand.—Two weeks ago two women presented themselves before me (one with an iron collar on her neck), from Trafalgar, in St. George's, the property of —, about twenty miles from my own residence. The substance of their complaint (on oath) was as follows: Milley Thomas, with a child at her breast, had been kept in chain and collar two weeks for the following offence:—On the first of August the nurse in the field was taken away; mothers of infants, compelled to work with children tied to their backs all day; did so for about six months; found it distressing, particularly in the steep fields. In February or March last, applied to Mr. Simpson, the attorney, to let them have a nurse: he said they must pay for it with extra labour, as the children were free. An old woman was put as nurse; and the six childrens' mothers were compelled to work *every Sunday as payment*, cutting grass, and any other employment about the works. Milley missed paying two Sundays; on one was sick, on the other, had to carry provisions to a sick brother twelve miles off. The overseer took her before the special magistrate, at Buff Bay; charged her with disobedience of orders, in not cutting grass on the two Sundays. No sentence was passed in her presence; but on returning home, the overseer said he had orders from

the Magistrate to work her in chains and collar for two weeks.—The other woman, Molly, had a dispute with one of the men in the field. The man struck her on the face ; she returned it, and a fight ensued. They were separated. The following week she and the man were taken before the Magistrate, at Buff Bay. The man was sentenced to six lashes ; but no sentence on the woman in her hearing. The overseer, however, said he had her sentence also, on paper. The next Monday evening, she and Milley had collars put round their necks, and were chained together with *a thick heavy cattle chain*, used to drag timber from the woods. No other chain was to be had on the spur of the moment ; they were locked up in the dark room that night ; next morning sent to the field with the gang. Milley, with *her child tied to her back*, and the heavy chain dragging between them, and in that way obliged to keep at work all day : at shellblow, locked up for the night ; after that kept every day about the works chained together, at night locked up. Fridays and Saturdays at work ; and on Sunday in the dark room all day :—allowed on an average two plaintains and a half each per day :—this continued two weeks, when Milley and her infant were released. But Molly, being sentenced to four weeks of the collar and chain, had to bear it alone : but it was found that the chain was too heavy for one to bear ; it was, therefore, taken off, and the collar only left on. On the following Sunday they made a complaint which was forwarded to the King's House. The Secretary referred the complaint to *the special justice*.—I understand that in St. George's and St. Andrew's there are very few properties without penal gangs. The Act authorizing penal gangs has not yet been disallowed by his Majesty—Government surely cannot know the tendency of its provisions. This day, a very decent woman (free) brought her son, a sickly boy of about 16, before me ; he is an Apprentice to a Mr. Roberts : has been lame for two months back, with a malignant ulceration of one of his toes, was neglected by his master, and made to work, notwithstanding the state of his foot, which bled constantly and daily got worse ; his mother took him to her house to try to get it cured, by rest and dressings. The master knew the boy was there ; after being with his mother about ten days, the toe beginning to improve, Roberts sent for him last Wednesday by the parish constable, put him in the stocks, next day carried him before Mr. —, Special Magistrate of St. David's—he was charged with going home from his master without his leave, and for this Mr. — sentenced him to receive 50 *lashes on the back* ; fortunately the poor boy got away from the constable in the night, or Mr. — might probably have had to stand his trial for murder, as in the boy's state of health, the infliction of fifty lashes would scarcely have left a chance of surviving. Nothing can equal the exemplary patience under suffering which the Apprentices every where exhibited—but can we expect it to continue ? They are cheated, abused, and ill-treated, and all under colour of a law, which was intended for their benefit ; but the day of retribution must come at last.”—“ To sum up the whole, the legal position of the Negro in Jamaica is this ;—he is nominally subject only to gratuitous labour for his master, for forty-five hours in the week, and to certain civil disabilities for public offices, which were considered incompatible with his dependent con-

dition. Such was the intention of the mother-country, and such too, is the pretended object of the Jamaica statutes. But, in fact, he remains an *emancipated prisoner* on the plantation to which he is attached ; substantially liable to the same punishments, and labouring under the same incapacities as heretofore. He cannot quit the estate, even during his own hours, without fear of punishment. He cannot dance with his Children, or associate with his neighbours, without punishment. He cannot complain to the Magistrate, or remonstrate with the master, without risk of a flogging for 'insolence,' or 'unjustifiable' absence. The whip follows him at every step ; imprisonment and hard labour await him at every turn. His home is converted into a prison, and the plantation into a prison-yard ! and, as if to prevent the possibility of his forgetting the custody in which his Apprenticeship places him, penal gangs patrol the estates, and bilboes are constructed in every village. Lastly, notwithstanding the reiterated provisions of the Colonial Acts, affecting to guarantee to him the undisturbed enjoyment of the time emphatically called his own, the machinery of those Acts is so ingeniously contrived, that he may, if he has once absented himself without permission, be legally worked for forty-two hours, in uninterrupted succession, and then dismissed with a flogging if he ventures to complain ! He remains destitute of nearly every right, except such as he possesses in common with the beasts of the forest ; and, in one respect, his situation is worse than theirs : for the time allotted to him by the Abolition Act, to cultivate his ground and find his family in food, may be abstracted for forty shillings currency, to be paid into the public treasury. Such is the Apprenticeship, as established by Colonial Law."*

* From an "Analysis of the Jamaica Acts to carry into effect the Act for Abolishing Slavery," by a Barrister ; which is strongly recommended to the Reader's attention.